



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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DISTRICTS CONSIDER WHETHER TO STOCK OVERDOSE DRUG AT HIGH SCHOOLS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – As the new school year begins, Kentucky school districts are considering whether to stock naloxone, also known by the brand name Narcan, an opioid-blocker that can be given in the event of a heroin or prescription painkiller overdose.

The drug is being made available free to high schools nationwide as an initiative of the Clinton Foundation and Adapt Pharma.

“Although we hope no student, staff or family member ever falls victim to drug abuse, we cannot ignore the potential that an overdose could occur at school,” Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt said. “This is an opportunity for schools to be prepared for that possibility and save a life.”

According to Kentucky’s Office of Drug Control Policy, heroin is especially pervasive in northern Kentucky, Louisville and Lexington. In fact, a growing number of young people who began abusing expensive prescription drugs are switching to heroin, which is cheaper and easier to buy.

It will be up to each school district to determine whether it wants to participate in the Narcan program. However, before it can be distributed to schools, staff must undergo training.

The [Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition](#), a non-profit agency based in Louisville, will be providing a free training at the Kentucky Public School Health Coordinators Summit on September 14 at the Embassy Suites in Lexington. More than 75 districts are signed up for the train the trainer session which will include:

- review of the law, [KRS 217.186](#)
- types of narcotics
- differences between a drug high and an overdose
- how to save a life, including the administration of Narcan
- the Good Samaritan Law, which provides an exemption from liability
- referring a student for treatment

The Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition also will provide training, by request, at public and private high schools throughout the state.

(more)

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Once personnel are trained, two doses of Narcan will be provided free of charge. Once those are used or the drug expires, it will be up to the district or school to provide a replacement. Under the program, Narcan will be distributed to schools as a nasal spray, and is to be used only for overdose of opioid drugs which include heroin, or opioid-based prescription painkillers such as Percocet, morphine or those containing codeine.

Naloxone attaches to the same parts of the brain that receive heroin and other opioids, and it blocks the opioids for 30-90 minutes to reverse the respiratory depression that would otherwise lead to death from overdose.

Kentucky Department of Education School Health Consultant Karen Erwin says no one knows the impact this program could have in schools. Currently, there is no mandate for schools to report health service incidents, although the Kentucky Department of Education has asked them to start doing so voluntarily.

In 2015, the Kentucky General Assembly passed [Senate Bill 192](#), also known as the “Heroin Bill”, and it was signed into law. The measure stiffened the penalties for importing and selling heroin in Kentucky, provided more money for treatment programs and increased the availability of naloxone.

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